

## [Ex-Stonecutter and his Wife--Spanish]

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### EX-STONECUTTER AND HIS WIFE - SPANISH

It was a small, one-room grocery store in a north-end, Spanish-Italian neighborhood. A [tinny?] bell on the door announced each customer. The space was once the living-room for the [Gonzagas?] in the days before Felipe had given up stonecutting for storekeeping. The two front windows had been cut larger; now they displayed oil cans, soap, packages of cereal, sacks of flour, strings of sausages. Inside, the air was a spicy fragrance. Perhaps it was the electric fan directed less upon the customers than upon the links of fat sausages that helped flavor the atmosphere with the meat's piquancy.

"Stonecutting? Me, no, I will never return to it. I was never so happy as here in this store." Felipe was brown and lean. His body, the wiry [leanness?] of youth. But his seamed face and graying hair spoke his age more truly. [C 3??]

"You know what he say once?" It was his wife speaking. A deep, rich voice that sang together the broken English words as if they were one. She was Felipe's counterpart in coloring. There the similarity ended. She was short, and lumpily stout beneath the cotton house dress. Slender gold circlets pierced her ears. Her broad feet strained against the pliant leather of bedroom slippers. As she spoke her black eyes rested affectionately, proudly on her husband. 2 "Once he say," she began, "once he say - an' I never forget it -

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that it is more happy for him to sell foods for to make people live, than to cut stone to make memories of dead people. An' he is right, no? Here it is good, clean work. For him, an' for me. No more heavy pants for me to shake out the dust, to soak them, an' scrub them in the washtub."

"In these times stonecutters are laid off every once in a while," Felipe added. "In the store we make our little profit every day steady. It isn't much, but it is steady-"

The wife said contentedly. "Here, too, we are all together. The family. The kitchen is in the back of the store. The bedrooms, upstairs. If sometimes Felipe is busy, he rap there on the radiator an' I come to help. If it is an hour he wants to sleep. I am here to take his place. We need to hire no extra clerk, the store is small."

Felipe said, "I was born in the hills near San Sebastian on the Bay. The nearest store was in a village about the size of North Montpelier. Just a small place. Sometimes I would ride down with my father to get the supply of flour an' sugar. I used to envy that storekeeper behind the counter. He seemed like a king to me. An' I would wish that some day I could have a store like that. We were poor farmers, an' a big family. But we lived good. The earth was rich for crops. We never needed for good food. From the hills I could see the ships coming into the Bay from England an' from America. It made me want to travel. 3 .... No, I did not learn the stonecutting trade over there. I was farmer like my father. My wife, she is from Santander, where most of the Barre Spanish are from. We were married in Barre. Some of the Barre Spanish learned the trade in Spain. My wife's brother was a good carver. He worked for many years in Saragossa -"

The wife interrupted, "I do not want to brag. It would do no good to brag, he is dead now for five years. He was a good carver, that one. Every shed in Barre was glad to have him work for them. He was a big man, weighed over two hundred pounds. But when he died there was nothing left to him. Not even a hundred pounds, he weighed. His lungs were sick a long time. We had a room here with us. I am glad he was not married, to leave a

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wife an' children behind him. We have four children, me an' Felipe. Only the youngest girl is with us now. She works in a beauty parlor on Main Street. But she is not satisfied. Some day she says she will have a place of her own. The other two girls are married. The boy is working for a wholesale company in Boston. It is a big company that imports Italian and Spanish foods."

..... "Go back to Spain?" Felipe asked. "Well, some day I would like to go back for a visit. But not while at is the [hell?] France has made of it. Fighting all the time, war, men killed, not even the women an' children safe. No, me, I will wait until it is all over. I have two brothers there, men with families. The last I hear they are fighting. My wife, she used to get a paper from Santander every 4 two weeks, but a little while after they start fighting, the paper stopped coming..... We do not know for sure what is going on. We are Loyalists. We are for the Spain we used to know. Verez, a stonecutter who lives down the street, tells us what his cousin was killed a few months ago. I do not know the whole story. The brother an' two others ran for protection into a village church. They were unarmed. Do you think the soldiers would wait to take them outside? No, they were killed right there in the church, in front of the altar, in front of the God that made them.

"The refugees have spread stories, too. Most of the Spanish-American sympathize with them. Some day they will turn the tables on France. Do you think they will forget that they saw their fathers an' brothers murdered? No, they will not forget it, an' some day they will make Spain the good old Spain that it used to be."

Felipe's wife shrugged her shoulders. "Refugees. Sure, there are thousands of them, but in the whole of Spain they are just a handful. What can a handful of people do against a government that has grown strong with the years? Besides, many of them will not go back to Spain. They will make their homes in France, England or the Americas. An' when once they have made homes an' are happy, do you think they will give that up to go back to Spain an' fight. No, no Felipe, the side that wins today is the side that will be Spain as long as we two are alive, an' longer."

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"Maybe you are right," Felipe granted. "Only the years 5 will tell. Our youngest daughter Amelia has a cousin her age who has been attending a trade school near San Sebastian. The school is run by the White Bonnet Nuns. That is not the right name for them, but always I have called them that because they wear the wide, stiff, white bonnets. In the last letter that Amelia received, the cousin says that the school has been closed against them. .... Yes, our children speak Spanish. Only Amelia an' one other girl can write it. They learned it from me an' my wife. Before they went to school they spoke Spanish at home all the time.

"The Club? Sure, I belong to the Spanish Club. We have good times. In the summer we have picnics. Mostly they are on Sunday, an' in the country near some pond. Now, any extra money we have at the Club goes to the Refugees. But some day the Club will have her own camp. Like the Italian Pleasure Club. They have a camp at Berlin Pond."